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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, October 27, 1936.

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Hello, folks. When the people of Washington and the country round-about looked out of their windows this morning the first thing that caught their eyes was a heavy coating of frost on the roofs, in fact it was a real freeze with a sheet of ice over the water in the water trough. A good heavy frost such as we had last night, and I presume many of you experienced two or three weeks ago, certainly puts an end to the growing season for tender crops. Last night long after dark I took a flashlight and a basket and gathered another basket of the green and slightly colored tomatoes from my garden and these tomatoes will be spread on a shelf in the cellar where the temperature is around 60 degrees to ripen.

No matter how long frost is in coming it always grieves me to see the annual flowering plants and the tender crops in the garden killed, but, that first hard frost in the fall marks the turning point of the seasons and I can now clean up the garden, sow rye where the beans and the tomatoes grew and plant my spring-blooming bulbs where the zinnias, cosmos, marigolds, scarlet sage and the geraniums were blooming so beautifully only yesterday. The bulbs of tulips, hyacinths, daffodils in great variety are now on sale in the stores and the sooner they are planted the better. A gentleman who grows bulbs by the tens of thousands was in my office yesterday and he gave me a new idea about planting tulips and crocus bulbs in the lawn. He said to simply take a basket of the medium sized or rather small bulbs and sow them broadcast over your lawn, then take a heavy trowel and plant each bulb wherever it chanced to fall. The advantage of this method is that you get a natural distribution of the bulbs in places they will be rather close together and in other places they will be more scattered. In the spring of the year the bulbs will come up and bloom before the grass requires cutting, then the lawn mower can be run right over them during the summer and the bulbs will remain in the ground and bloom year after year.

Where the bulbs of tulips, narcissus and hyacinths are being planted in beds or borders it is necessary to spade up the soil and about a half pound of a good fertilizer worked into the soil of each square yard of bed. Bone meal is a good fertilizer to use for bulbs, especially where you intend to leave the bulbs in the same place for several years, but bone meal should be supplemented by the use of a little complete fertilizer such as is used for growing vegetables. Manure should not be used for mixing with the soil of the bulb bed but may be used as a mulch or top-dressing after the bulbs are planted. Now that the annual flowering plants are killed in many sections the ground can be very profitably planted to bulbs for spring blooming. Bulbs are reasonable in price and when once you get a start you can often grow good bulbs for your own planting.

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Where you are planting solid beds or borders of bulbs space the individual bulbs about 7 or 8 inches apart in each direction. This applies especially to tulips and daffodils also hyacinths. Use a trowel for planting the bulbs and don't be afraid to put them in rather deep, say about 4 or 5 inches and root end downward. If the ground is dry give it a good watering after you plant your bulbs because you want those bulbs to begin to form roots right away, and don't plant bulbs where the ground is wet or where the water will stand during the winter and early spring.

So much for the bulbs. Now the first heavy frost always kills the tops of the dahlias and cannas making it necessary to cut off the tops and to dig and store the roots. There is no great hurry about digging the roots provided the frosted tops are immediately cut off. In digging the roots of both dahlias and cannas I like to leave a little of the soil adhering to them, then I place them on the dirt floor of a very cool cellar but where there will be no chance of their freezing. I cover the roots of both dahlias and cannas with a little sandy soil. In the case of the cannas I just barely cover them but with the dahlias it is a good idea to have about 6 inches of covering over them. The roots should be kept reasonably cool and fairly dry. Sometimes the covering of the dahlia roots becomes so dry that the roots begin to shrivel and in that case a very little water should be added but not very much. Some growers clean all of the soil from their dahlia roots then store them in barrels in a cool cellar but I find that I can keep them better where they are covered with light soil or with dry peat moss to keep the air away from them. Where any water is applied during the winter care should be taken to avoid getting the water into the hollow stems as this will cause the stems to rot and the buds next spring come only from the base of the stem and not from the root itself.

That frost last night made a lot of work for me but there is one satisfaction, I can now make a cleanup of my garden.

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